



SUBSISTENCE HALIBUT PROGRAM 2005 REPORT

May 2005

Greetings from the Alaska Region of NOAA Fisheries Service (NMFS), Restricted Access Management (RAM) Program. We are pleased to bring you this update of information on the Subsistence Halibut program.

First, we want to let you know about some changes to the program. The major changes are the addition of three new types of permits: effective this month, tribes and communities may apply for, and receive, "Community Harvest Permits," "Educational Permits," and "Ceremonial Permits." As explained below, Community Harvest Permits are available in Area 2C only and Ceremonial and Educational Permits are available in Areas 2C and 3A only. Also explained below are some changes to the amount of gear that may be used in some areas and to the amount of halibut that may be kept on board.

Subsistence fishing for halibut off Alaska was first authorized by regulation on May 15, 2003. Two seasons have now been completed and the third year of the program is underway. So, in addition to explaining some recent regulation changes, we also report on the numbers of SHARCs issued during the first two years and provide harvest information for the 2003 season.

We hope that you find this report useful and informative. Feel free to contact us (contact information below) with any questions or comments. Our best wishes for a safe and successful season.

Alaska Region, NOAA Fisheries Service (NMFS)
James W. Balsiger, Regional Administrator

By: 
Philip J. Smith, Program Administrator
Restricted Access Management Program

RAM may be contacted as follows:

Telephone (toll free): (800) 304-4846 (#2)
Telephone (Juneau Local): (907) 586-7202
Facsimile: (907) 586-7354
Internet Home Page: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov>
E-mail: RAM.Alaska@noaa.gov
Mailing Address: NMFS/RAM
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, AK 99802-1668
Street Address: 709 West 9th Street
Room 713
Juneau, AK 99801

Subsistence Halibut Registration Certificates

To harvest halibut under the special subsistence halibut rules, fishermen must first apply for and receive a Subsistence Halibut Registration Certificate (SHARC). The main reason that SHARCs are required is to create a list of participants from whom to collect effort and harvest information.

There are two types of SHARCs – Rural Resident Registration Certificates and Alaska Native Tribal Registration Certificates. Rural resident SHARCs are valid for two years from the date of issuance and tribal member SHARCs are valid for four years from the date of issuance. SHARC application forms can be obtained by contacting RAM; also, applications can be found online through the NOAA Fisheries Service, Alaska Region, Internet site.

Number of SHARCs Issued: 2003 and 2004

	Alaska Tribal	Rural Resident	Total
Issued	6,544	7,258	13,802

Number of SHARCs Issued: 2003 Only

	Alaska Tribal	Rural Resident	Total
Issued	5,519	5,993	11,512

Number of SHARCs Issued: 2004 Only

	Alaska Tribal	Rural Resident	Total
Issued	1,025	1,265	2,290

Number of SHARCs Issued by IPHC Areas: 2003 and 2004

Area	Alaska Tribal	Rural Resident	Total
2C	3,524	4,768	8,292
3A	1,076	2,126	3,202
3B	529	75	604
4A	82	111	193
4B	6	25	31
4C	282	13	295
4D	49	3	52
4E	966	137	1,133

Certificate Renewal

Beginning this month (May 2005), the SHARCs that were first issued to rural residents in 2003 will expire. In order to continue to subsistence fish for halibut after the expiration date, fishermen must renew their certificates. To make the process easier, RAM has mailed renewal applications and has already begun to process renewals. It's also possible to apply for renewals online.

Remember to renew your SHARC if it will expire before you go fishing!

2003 Harvest Data

2003 Subsistence Halibut Harvest Data

The collection of harvest data is very important for the management of the halibut fishery. Information on the total harvest from all sectors (commercial, recreational, guided, and subsistence) is used in determining the status of the halibut resource and identifying the needs for further research. Reporting of subsistence halibut harvests is voluntary. However, fishermen are strongly encouraged to report their catches so that the most accurate information is available to the resource managers and to the public.

Under a contract with NOAA Fisheries, the Subsistence Division of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game mails a one-page survey form to SHARC holders every year. The Subsistence Division uses responses to these surveys, as well as household visits in some communities, to compile the data. They then prepare a report on their findings, including the estimated number of fishermen participating in the program and the estimated amount of halibut they harvested.

Information from the 2003 season is summarized below; the survey for the 2004 season has been sent and responses have begun to be received. The 2004 report will be completed later this year.

2003 Harvests by SHARC Type (rounded to ~1,000 pounds)

	Total Pounds	Rural Resident	Alaska Tribal
2003	1,041,000	578,000 (55.5%)	463,000 (44.5%)

2003 Harvests by Gear Type (rounded to ~1,000 pounds)

	Total Pounds	Rural Resident	Alaska Tribal
Setline (fixed)	753,000 (72.3%)	427,000 (56.7%)	326,000 (43.3%)
Hand-Operated	288,000 (27.7%)	152,000 (52.8%)	136,000 (47.2%)

2003 Halibut Harvests and Percentage of Total Harvests by IPHC Management Area (rounded to ~1,000 pounds)

Management Area	Subsistence Harvest	Total Harvest (all sectors)	% Subsistence
2C	628,000	11,675,000	5.4%
3A	278,000	27,965,000	1.0%
3B	28,000	17,447,000	1.6%
4A-E	107,000	12,234,000	0.9%
Total	1,041,000	69,321,000	1.5%

There were many estimates of subsistence halibut harvests used by the managing agencies prior to the collection of the 2003 data. These estimates ranged from 300,000 to 1,000,000 pounds.

Program Changes

Note that the following summary of Subsistence Halibut regulations is for informational purposes only. It should not be relied on as a statement of the legal requirements of the regulations. Current regulations that govern the Subsistence Halibut Program can be found at 50 CFR § 300.

Changes in Effect for 2005:

Regulations governing the Subsistence Halibut Program are adopted by NOAA Fisheries after the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) has made a formal recommendation. Effective May 2, 2005, regulations governing some aspects of the program were amended. Most of the amendments apply only to a specific IPHC management area. A summary can be found below.

The amendments also establish three new permit programs that apply to at least some of the IPHC areas – a Community Harvest Permit, a Ceremonial Permit, and an Educational Permit.

- Community Harvest Permit – This permit applies to Area 2C only and is intended to allow an Alaska Native Tribe or eligible community (if no Alaska Native Tribe exists in that community) to harvest halibut without reduced gear and harvest restrictions. Rules to apply for and use community harvest permits can be found on the NMFS website.
- Ceremonial Permit – This permit applies to Areas 2C and 3A only and is intended to allow an Alaska Native Tribe to harvest up to 25 halibut for traditional cultural or ceremonial occasions. Rules to apply for and use ceremonial permits can be found on the NMFS website.
- Educational Permit – This permit applies to Areas 2C and 3A only and is intended to allow Alaska Native Tribes to sponsor educational programs that include the harvest of halibut. Rules to apply for and use educational permits can be found on the NMFS website, but the permit cannot be applied for online.

In addition to these new permit types, the new regulations also make some adjustments to the number of hooks that can be used in certain areas, to the numbers of halibut that can be retained in one day (bag limits), and make minor changes to a variety of other program features. The table below summarizes those amendments by IPHC regulatory area:

Summary of Subsistence Halibut Amendments by IPHC Areas

Area 2C	Gear	30 hooks per vessel limit
	Bag Limits	20 halibut per vessel per day
	Special Area Restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Setline gear closure in an arc up to 4 miles south of Low Island (Sitka Sound) between June 1 and August 31. ▪ Community harvest permits may not be used in the Sitka LAMP nor in non-rural areas. ▪ Ceremonial permits may not be used in the Sitka LAMP area between June 1 and August 31
	Community Harvest Permits	Permitted, allowing 30 hooks per SHARC holder up to 3 SHARC holders (90 hooks maximum per vessel) and unrestricted retention.
	Ceremonial Permits	Permitted, allowing retention of 25 halibut per permit, but subject to 30 hooks per vessel.

	Educational Permits	Permitted, allowing retention of 25 halibut per permit, but subject to 30 hooks per vessel.
Area 3A	Gear	30 hooks per SHARC holder up to 3 SHARC holders (90 hooks maximum per vessel).
	Special Area Restrictions	Additional portion of Cook Inlet closed to subsistence, generally waters North of 59°30.40'N. Lat.
	Ceremonial Permits	Permitted, allowing retention of 25 halibut per permit and 30 hooks per SHARC holder up to 3 SHARC holders (90 hooks maximum per vessel).
	Educational Permits	Permitted, allowing retention of 25 halibut per permit and 30 hooks per SHARC holder up to 3 SHARC holders (90 hooks maximum per vessel).
Area 3B	Gear	30 hooks per SHARC holder up to 3 SHARC holders (90 hooks maximum per vessel).
Area 4A	Gear	30 hooks per SHARC holder up to 3 SHARC holders (90 hooks maximum per vessel).
Area 4B	Gear	30 hooks per SHARC holder up to 3 SHARC holders (90 hooks maximum per vessel).
Area 4C	Gear	No hook restriction
	CDQ Provisions	May retain legal sized halibut for subsistence while CDQ fishing without having the poundage count against CDQ allocation
Area 4D	Gear	No hook restriction
	CDQ Provisions	May retain any sized halibut for subsistence while CDQ fishing without having the poundage count against CDQ allocation
Area 4E	Gear	No hook restriction
	CDQ Provisions	May retain any sized halibut for subsistence while CDQ fishing without having the poundage count against CDQ allocation

Future Changes:

The Council has recommended other improvements to the program. If the changes are approved, and if regulations are prepared to implement them, they will most likely be in effect during 2006. The major proposed changes include:

- Replacing the \$400 customary trade regulation with a provision that allows a person receiving subsistence caught halibut to reimburse the fisher for expenses directly related to the harvest of subsistence halibut.
- Restricting the use of charter boats registered with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to allow only the owner (and immediate family) to fish for subsistence halibut from the vessel.
- Allowing the use of ceremonial and educational permits in non-rural areas (areas otherwise closed to subsistence halibut fishing) by Alaska Native Tribes within traditional fishing grounds.

The other proposed changes are specific to IPHC management areas and sub-areas. Information on council actions on the subsistence halibut program can be found on the Council's internet web site: <www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc>.